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Women's Citizenship, Change and Continuation in Parliamentary Debates

Marques-Pereira, Bérengère

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IN BELGIUM

WOMEN'S CITIZENSHIP,
CHANGE AND CONTINUATION
IN PARLIMENTARY DEBATES

BY
BÉRENGÈRE MARQUES-PEREIRA

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Preface

This article was first presented at the Conference *Women's Empowerment and Political Presence* the 4. Seminar of the EC programme: 'Gender and Citizenship: Social Integration and Social Exclusion in European Welfare States', in Aalborg, October 16-17, 1998, and printed in the fourth report from the Seminary Report. . The paper focuses on changes and transformation of the discourse on women's representation in Belgium over an extended period through three parliamentary debates.

From a comparative perspective women's political citizenship in Belgium is a special case because of the decision in 1994 to adopt gender quotas on national election lists in order to achieve a balanced distribution of seats between women and men. The bill was in fact supported by all parties but with different arguments. The Belgian case is interesting compared to the Nordic case, where gender quotas since the 1970s have been used in a very different way.

Birte Siim

Abstract¹

This article intends to examine the representations of the political citizenship of women in Belgium as expressed by the country's political forces in their parliamentary debates on woman suffrage at the local level (1920) and woman suffrage at the legislative and provincial level (1948) and in their debate on the balanced distribution of men and women on electoral lists (1994). The purpose of this study therefore is not simply to report the arguments given for and against the acquisition and exercise of this citizenship. The aim is to understand, through these arguments, how the three common meanings of citizenship are represented when they apply to women. These three meanings are: first that citizenship is a status (a set of rights and duties), second that it is an identity (a sense of belonging to the political community), and third that it is a practice expressed in the form of political representation and participation (Citizenship as practice refers to a practice based on the individual's capacity to carry weight in the public forum, the right to have rights, the right to demand rights).²

According to the famous essay by T.H. Marshall "Social Class and Citizenship",³ in order to be a full-fledged member of society not only did one have to enjoy the protection of the law but also be able to shape this law by exercising one's democratic rights. In the 20th century, the notion of citizenship has come to include various social rights such as the right to education, health care, unemployment and retirement benefits. That is to say that a person cannot be a full-fledged member and participate in life in society unless his or her fundamental needs are satisfied. This enlarged meaning of citizenship thus reflects the fact that: on the one hand, existing rights are extended to new categories of people (e.g. the shift from suffrage on the basis of property qualification to universal suffrage) and on the other hand, new elements defining citizenship are

created (e.g. the introduction of new types of rights such as social rights which ensure the reproduction of individuals despite the risks of unemployment, occupational accidents, etc.). Consequently, according to T.H. Marshall, the full expression of citizenship requires the existence of a democratic and liberal welfare State. By guaranteeing civil, political and social rights, the welfare State ensures that each member of society feels like a full-fledged citizen capable of participating in life in society and being an integrated part of it. As rights of the individual in the community of the Nation-State, they are ultimately guaranteed by the State. But that is not the only characteristic of citizenship rights. On the one hand, they include duties for whoever exercises them. On the other hand, they impose a constraint on the State. In fact, citizenship rights are conditioned by duties. Thus in Western Europe, social citizenship means participation in social rights which requires the general solidarity of wage earners: the unemployed, pensioners, ill people see their rights conditioned by the duties of workers, the working population, the healthy, rights and duties guaranteed by the State. Moreover, the citizenship rights impose different types of constraints on the State. If civil and political rights are rights-freedoms which the individual enjoys with regard to the State which sees its sovereign authority limited, social rights are rights-claims of the individual on the State, services in money or in kind which the individual consumes, because they are guaranteed by the implementation of policies.

It is in this framework that the notion of equality has evolved from equal law and equal status to equal results, equal treatment, equal opportunity and positive discrimination. This evolution poses the problem of the State's regulatory role. Equal law and equal status are part of a procedural legal framework that has enabled *de facto* discrimination against women, that has made it possible to place them under guardianship. It is equal treatment, equality in the treatment of the law that has forbidden discrimination on the basis of sex that has enabled the discriminated person to plead discrimination. Equal treatment thus implies the right to have access to justice in order to assert one's rights. It is the discriminated person who has the burden of proof, and the person accused of discrimination has the right to claim the existence of objective reasons justifying the discrimination. Equal opportunity replaces the idea of equality with that of equal chances, equal conditions. There is an obvious underlying ideology of free competition and meritocracy in the context of distributive justice but it does not lead to equal results (reverse discrimination). The implementation of equal results is based on the idea of proportionality, which is expressed in the form of positive discrimination (affirmative action).

Without a doubt the notion of equality is at the heart of the representation of female citizenship. The notion of political representation is not of lesser importance in this regard, since representative democracy (with participatory democracy) gives substance to the individual's ability to carry weight in the public forum by deliberating on choices of society. Also, it is important to bear in mind the fact that political representation is based on three models. The first

standard ideal refers to representation as a conferral of power: the representative is a performer deprived of autonomy, a sort of ambassador bound by an imperative mandate. The second model concerns representation as a relationship of confidence between the elected official and the electorate. The representative appears as a trustee provided with an autonomous mandate that enables him to act and speak on behalf of the interests of those represented, that is to say interests as seen through the eyes of the representative. The last model refers to representation as a microcosm representative of the sociological composition of society. This representation concerns not so much a representative but a representative organisation (the political party) reproducing the characteristics of the political body. Ultimately it could be said that the representative mirrors the traits of the electorate.

Also, the analysis will focus on the representations of political equality between men and women and on the related notions of representative democracy. Two questions have to be asked in this regard: to what extent are politics seen as men's business, and to what extent do the arguments used refer to the three key arguments of the reactionary rhetoric which can, paradoxically, be used by progressives? To answer the first question, we must examine the three meanings of citizenship. We will show the extent to which there is ambiguity in these meanings, ambiguity arising from the tension between equality and difference which is related to the tension between private and public and the dilemma between universalism and particularism, which subsequently specifies the notions of representative democracy. For the second question, we must look at the arguments of reactionary rhetoric highlighted by A. Hirschmann.⁴ The argument of perverse effect states that any attempt to modify the existing order produces effects opposite to the objective pursued. The argument of futility implies that the proposals for political and social change are incapable of modifying the status quo. The theory of endangerment is that the reforms envisaged are to be proscribed because they would jeopardise more valuable achievements. We will see that these three themes are inevitably raised at each phase concerning the political citizenship of women.

These questions thus place the analysis of representations of political equality and representative democracy in the context of the problem of the inclusion/exclusion of women (as individuals or as a group) in relation to political citizenship. In this sense, the political participation of women is examined through the representations, which give meaning to the relationship between politics, democracy and citizenship. By analysing the debates in the Belgian parliament over an extended period of time, it should be possible to evaluate the extent to which there has been change or transformation in the discourse on the tension between private and public which is given substance by the representations of political equality and representative democracy. These representations fall within the institutional framework of segmented pluralism and consociative democracy. The decisions take root in political practices characterised by the

search for compromise between the different expressions of the "political worlds" and the cleavages of Belgian society.

The confrontations between Catholics and non-Catholics, on the one hand, between the upholders of socialism and economic liberalism, on the other, are the product of oppositions concerning, respectively, the extent of the area of intervention that the Church is recognised as having in public life, and the role of the State in the economy. The tension between the communities has to do with the structure of the State and is organised around the cleavage dividing Dutch speakers and French speakers. The philosophical, class, community and language divisions are given expression in a system of "pillars" which segments Belgian society into three "worlds": the Christian world, the Socialist world and the Liberal world. These three worlds have become structured since the 19th century by gradually developing a network of institutions ranging from the party to various mechanisms such as trade unions, women's or youth organisations, not to mention services like the mutual health insurance societies, cooperatives, hospitals, day nurseries.

The Catholic pillar is the most structured: what differentiates it from the Socialist and Liberal pillars is particularly the organisational and/or ideological links between the institutions supporting the life of individuals, the parties, the trade unions and the Church, but there is also its openness to all the classes, its widespread presence in the Flemish region. The movement of secularisation has certainly weakened the direct links with the Church, although it has not affected the strength of the cultural and social institutions.

The Socialist organisations have their social base with salaried workers and are primarily present in Wallonia, an old industrialised region. In contrast, the Liberal organisations have their social base in the bourgeoisie and professional and self-employed class; their individualism can be explained by the lack of genuine mass organisations in this family.

The Socialist and Catholic worlds are in competition when it comes to power-sharing. The Liberal and Socialist worlds have a common feature: although they were initially both anti-clerical, today the Church is not a reference for them, even if their respective parties have opened up to Catholics. In 1961, the Liberals abandoned their anti-clericalism and adopted positions that were clearly anti-Socialist. As early as 1969, the Socialists called for a rally of all the progressives, and beginning in 1979 the Flemish Socialists attempted a breakthrough to Christian workers and intellectuals.

It is within the three Christian, Socialist and Liberal worlds that the terms have been set for the conflicts and compromises resulting from cleavages which, more often than not, are intertwined. This intertwining helps attenuate the disruptive effects of the multiple contrasts by avoiding polarisation on one of them. This stabilisation remains nonetheless precarious, because the development of centrifugal forces within the "pillars" is always possible, when a particular conflict causes the superposition of cleavages. This precarious stabilisation is reinforced by the practice of the political elites (i.e. the leaders and heads of the pillars) of giving one another

mutual guarantees. The negotiated solution of conflicts between them is based on decisions reached by common consent rather than by application of the majority rule. Compromises thus materialise in the form of package deals where each side obtains satisfactions in terms of power or their ideological programme. For the past 25 years, the pillar system has been in a state of crisis on account of a whole range of factors.⁵

In the 1960s, the different political "worlds" split, sociologically speaking, into a French branch and a Flemish branch. This was followed in the 1970s by a political split and in the 1980s by an institutional split, with the result that the sociological importance of the different "worlds" can only be measured at the regional level and no longer at the national level. Furthermore, new political parties appeared: the creation of the so-called regionalist parties in the late 1950s and 1960s was followed by the founding of the environmentalist parties and the extreme right wing parties, such as the Vlaamse Blok (nationalist, neofascist Flemish party), in the early 1980s. In the end, the "pillarization" into different "worlds" was weakened: while the relationship between the parties and the trade unions became distended and some political practices were called into question, the attachment of individuals to their "world" lost its traditional importance, being determined more by efficiency than by philosophical criteria. Nonetheless, this system has not disappeared and influences the way in which citizenship is seen and exercised within a socio-historic context of the "worlds", to such an extent that it is possible to talk of the "societal mire of citizenship in Belgium."⁶

Within this institutional framework, it should be underlined that Belgium is witnessing a transformation of the "societal paradigm"⁷ of which equality between men and women is a part. In the period immediately following World War II, Belgium could be considered a male breadwinner model. Indeed, the traditional familistic model is largely hegemonic. It is based on a strict division of labour between genders: a de facto obligation for women to care and a right for men to work. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a transition to a new model appeared. This model was evolving from a male breadwinner model to a dual breadwinner model. Preoccupations with achieving equality between men and women began to emerge. But as in all periods of transition, some characteristics of the familistic model continue to exist. For example, in 1958 the civil equality of married women was decided, even though the equality of spouses in the matrimonial regime was not achieved until 1976, and the equality of parental rights regarding children was recognised in 1964. Since 1981 and the adoption of deregulation measures (especially under the seven-year Christian Socialist/Liberal coalition which governed from 1981 to 1988), a familistic discourse has appeared in parallel with the discourse on flexibility and the discourse on the need to adapt to market dynamics.

1. From equal status to equal results

At stake in the parliamentary debates of 1920 and 1948 was the partial, and then total, acquisition of equal status between men and women with regard to political rights.

The Catholics imposed the women's right to vote in communal elections in exchange for the universal manhood suffrage called for by the Socialists. From 1902 until 1940, the Belgian Workers' Party (POB) used double talk - that of the principle of equality but of the need to postpone it, whereas the Catholic party made woman suffrage part of its strategy to fight the advance of Socialism.⁸

1.1. Communal suffrage: women's right to vote in local elections

Communal suffrage was clearly not granted to women with the idea of equality in mind, it being presented as essential schooling in politics for women so that they could acquire sufficient training to participate in political life and as a middle ground between private and public life. The rapporteur of the committee of the Chamber of Representatives thus stated: "The majority of the committee thinks that it is now impossible to refuse half of the Belgians the right to at least show their administrative capacity to prepare them for the complete exercise of their political rights. Local government is but an extension of family life. As a statesman of Great Britain said recently, women have been chancellors of the exchequer in most households for centuries now, and experience has shown that they know how to work wonders that men did not even suspect."⁹

This confinement of women to the sphere of reproduction was compounded by the obsessive fear that politics would become women's business. The debates in the Chamber of Representatives prove this when the discussions become bogged down over the issue of the formation of boards to run polling stations. Thus, the speech by Pépin is explicit: "It has to be said that there will have to be a certain number of male assessors, otherwise you risk having an electoral board presided over by a woman with all the assessors being women. (...) If the votes have to be counted with the assistance of a large number of women, since these women have never been present at electoral operations, it will not be easy to manage. What is more, a lot of women, mothers of families, detained by household duties, will ask to be excused, and this will create a lot of difficulties in setting up the board."¹⁰ As men's business, politics risked jeopardising women's morality, as suggested in the speech by Poncelet: "There is no reason to call on women to sit on electoral boards. It is not a question here of giving women rights, but much to the contrary a question of imposing a burden on them. In fact, this burden can be very unpleasant for a woman and much heavier than for a man. The mother of a family or quite simply

a housewife who is part of an electoral board will have to be present at the operations for the whole day; she will even often have to extend her presence until late in the night for the counting of votes. Is this acceptable? (...) I would therefore rally to an amendment in which electoral boards would be composed exclusively of men."¹¹ In response to this, Pussemier noted that such a concern made no sense since there was no question of appointing a woman to chair a board: "He will allow me to point out that in this matter we are not talking about women taking the chair of the electoral board, but quite simply sitting as assessors in the morning. Let us not forget that it is the chairmen of the board who alone have to sit for the entire day, because it is the different board chairmen who form the counting stations."¹² At the time, it was clearly out of the question for women to have any responsibilities other than those of fulfilment, and even these responsibilities were not supposed to keep a "woman from her own mission, which is especially to take care of the home and the various duties that this burden imposes on her,"¹³ as the Catholic deputy Woeste recalled. The partial equality of political rights cannot be conceived in the early 20th century in any other way than a reaffirmation that men and women had different roles and that this was part of their natural mission or calling. Membership in the political community, even partial, could not cause harm to the family, a social matter, as the speech by the Catholic deputy Woeste testifies, arguing the need to grant political rights to women who have acquired Belgian nationality by marriage: "It should not be forgotten that there is an aspect of interest to the social order here: that of the cohesion of the family. A Belgian man marries a foreign woman who, through this act, becomes Belgian (...). children are born of this union, and these children are Belgian. However, it is in this group of Belgians that the mother, responsible for the upbringing of the children, would remain a foreigner, or at least if she is no longer foreign, she would not be in the same situation as the other members of the family, those who are most dear to her. It would be going against the rules that must govern the organisation of the family, and it would cause genuine ferments of discord within the family."¹⁴

It is in this familistic way of thinking that prostitutes were excluded from communal suffrage and widows were admitted to legislative suffrage if they had not remarried and if their husbands had died as servicemen in the war or been Belgian citizens shot or killed by the enemy during the war. If these men left behind no wives, then their mothers, if widows, were allowed to vote. Also permitted at the polls were women sentenced to prison or held in detention during the enemy occupation for patriotic reasons. This "vote of the dead" by proxy indicates the extent to which the figure of the citizen is that of the citizen-soldier, since the abolition of suffrage on the basis of property qualification demeaned the figure of the citizen-property owner.

Belgian women had to wait until the end of the Second World War to have the same political rights as men. Paradoxically, in 1920 they had already acquired the right to be elected. That is why in 1948 women were giving speeches in parliament during the debates on universal woman suffrage.

1.2. Universal suffrage

In 1948, the debates differed little from those of 1920-1921. The representatives remained impervious to the idea of equality because the naturalist concept of women firmly rooted them in a situation of difference, politics remaining above all men's business, even if woman suffrage was presented as the reward for women's patriotic attitude. Nonetheless, the electoralist reflexes counting on women to ensure the triumph of the conservative cause remained strong. It was the Socialist Vermeulen, minister of the interior, who opened the debate in the Chamber of Representatives by responding to the Socialists' objectives to woman suffrage. In so doing, he denounced the arguments specific to the reactionary rhetoric, used nonetheless by the progressives. In fact, the objective that "women are not demanding the right to vote" and "do not have the necessary education to exercise it" actually mobilised the argument of futility: obtaining equal political rights would be in vain. Only the Liberal woman Senator Ciselet rose up against the idea of women being politically passive: "Do not believe, Mr Minister, that Belgian women have remained indifferent to politics (...) They have considered all the responsibilities that are incumbent on them and they have done better than accept them, they have been demanding them for the past thirty years. But they demand them in the way we do it here, without processions and without seditious shouting, with calm, good sense, in a reflected manner, through the intermediary of their political groups, their professional groups, their social groups. We knew too well that woman suffrage exclusively depended on agreements between parties to waste our energy on vain demonstrations in the street."¹⁵

The argument of futility used by the Socialists was backed up by the idea of perverse effect and endangerment conveyed in the objection that "women would perpetuate the domination of clericalism in our country (...) women voters would jeopardise the action undertaken by the left-wing parties for the benefit of the right."¹⁶ Because women could not act as individuals-citizens due to a lack of expertise and education, their suffrage could only form a mass to be manipulated by the Catholic party. The argument was taken on board by the Socialist Blume herself in her attempt to delay the law's entry into force until 1950: "Given the fact that the Royal question has not been settled, we believe that the vote for women will be used to make the female mass - which no more in our case than in your case is still very educated - a manipulated mass in order to distort what would be the profound thinking of the country in this matter."¹⁷

The way in which Vermeulen replied to such objections is interesting because it shows an egalitarian Socialist's ambiguities in the tension between the equality and difference of women. That is why I have taken the liberty of quoting him at length:

"In the area of general policy, it is probably not a bad idea to have women intervene at the legislative level in problems like alcoholism, which is of such profound interest to the health of

the population itself.

"Far be it from me to confine women to a specific role in whatever field. Their opinion must embrace the entire nation as must the opinion of the other citizens. And to those who fear that the peace of a home will not withstand the construction of different ideas, I believe that I can say that at present a lot of women have a political opinion (...). The right to vote conferred on women must, even from this angle, be considered a favourable reform, since it will provide an outlet for an opinion hitherto unrecognised, an outlet that may, if need be, bring harmony back to the home. (...).

"Today, it is no longer possible to say that women do not have the necessary education, since they have had access to all public jobs and all posts. The argument is now used in a form that consists in insinuating that women do not have the objectivity or the necessary level-headedness to exercise their rights.

"At a time when men show such passion and often such violence in their ideological struggles, this argument seems to me specious; it may perhaps be conceded that women are less apt at being political activists than men and are even less interested in devoting themselves to it, but exercising the right to vote, shared by all citizens, does not imply an active participation in political struggles (...).

"The right to vote, moreover, will be an opportunity for women to develop their political education (...)." ¹⁸ With regard to the objection that "women voters would jeopardise the action undertaken by the left-wing parties to the benefit of the right (...), I don't know who woman suffrage will benefit. I don't know whether some would speculate on the electoral benefit that the suffrage would give them.

"In 1948, it is not a modification of parliamentary representation that can call into question the conquests of a solidly organised proletariat.

"I certainly know that if in 1902 there was the desire to establish a genuine political democracy, in 1948 there is the desire to lay the foundations of a genuine economic democracy." ¹⁹

In this regard, the speeches by the Socialist Blume are interesting, because she places the emphasis on the idea of full and complete citizenship which cannot be reduced to political rights but have to include civil and social rights. Thus, Blume speaks in favour of the need to acquire citizenship as this set of rights, while nonetheless arguing that the entry into force of the law on universal woman suffrage should be postponed: "That is why I am depositing today, on behalf of my party, on the desk of the Chamber of Representatives, a proposal for a comprehensive reform of the Civil Code, and I say to you Gentlemen, the Catholics, we will await you there. Not only do we want our political rights but also our civil rights, and alas! we know that if we are put in a minority when it comes time to acquire these civil rights, we will never have them (...). I think, as befits a good Socialist, that economic equality is worth just as much, and perhaps more,

than political equality pure and simple (...).

"That is why we don't want a situation where we obtain this right to vote, which for us must be a means and an instrument for new conquests, for the first time under circumstances that tomorrow would actually prevent the acquisition of all the other rights that we want to win."²⁰ This Socialist double talk of the wait-and-see kind is legitimised in the name of a radicalism of principles.

With the same view to achieving full and complete citizenship, the Socialist woman senator Spaak legitimises civil, political and economic equality in the name of a specific female identity based on reproductive roles, as if equality could only be seen with reference to the difference between the genders; but at the same time this argument was justified in the name of an identity-based citizenship founded on the sense of belonging to the political community created by the patriotism of women. The figure of the citizen-soldier seems to be superimposed by the idea of full and complete citizenship. Whatever the case, may the reader allow me to quote her at length, because the ambiguities in the tension between equality and difference are again so apparent. Thus, referring to the figure of Emile Vandervelde, one of the founders of the workers' party and often called "the boss", Spaak stated:

"For a long time now (...) at the congress of Quaregnon, famous in the annals of the workers' party, this party included in its programme the civil, political and economic equality of men and women. (...).

"I would not forgive myself if I did not mention to you the great figure of Emile Vandervelde, who was one of the most fervent defenders of the female cause. He protected the working family in all its aspects. He too understood the role played by women in the development of family life. (...)." ²¹ In the mid-20th century, the confusion between female cause and familism persists.

Referring to the examination in parliamentary committees of "matters specific to women", Spaak argued in favour of the representation of the voice of women, or rather of "the woman's" voice, and continued her speech in these terms: "(...) whether the discussion be the home, or even the family, the voice of the housewife was not heard; whether the subject of concern be the protection of motherhood, the upbringing of children, care for the family in general, the voice of the mother was not heard; whether the concern be for the lot of the female nurse, teacher, worker, of all wage-earning women, the woman's voice was not heard; whether the subject of concern be rightly the lot of the farmer's wife, she who has perhaps the hardest life of all women, her voice was not heard.

"Whether the subject of concern be that of the protection of the home against debauchery, alcoholism and gambling, the voice of the spouse protecting the home and defending her honour was not heard. (...).

"When discussion turns to the great problem of peace, this problem so dear to all women, neither the voice of the housewife, the spouse, the female worker, the female employee, the farmer's wife was heard (...).

"Some wonder whether a woman has the sense of responsibilities. Allow me to remind you of her attitude during the war. She did not ask herself whether the parliament had granted her civil rights and political rights. She exercised them. The mother, when the spouse or father was gone, courageously, bravely, placed herself at the head of the family, tending to the material interests of all, the health and upbringing of the children, with that sole concern of giving the father who had returned a vigorous and healthy child. (...) She hid Jewish children, dissimulated allied soldiers, took part in all the resistance groups, was imprisoned. (...).

"Exercising at your sides their civil and political rights, Belgian women defended with you the cause of liberty and democracy. Like you, they suffered for the same ideal."²²

Eliane Gubin and Leen Van Molle note quite rightly the forces behind the ambivalence found in the tension between equality and difference: "The result is steady ambiguity, a wavering between the desire to take advantage of the know-how of women acquired in 'female' areas (upbringing, childhood, charity) and the desire to have their rights recognised as human beings. The consequence of this ambiguity is that it shapes the political conscience of women in a blurred space midway between public and private life, without any clear contours."²³ It is probably necessary to get the measure of the sexist imagination of that time and to bear in mind what Michèle Riot-Sarcey calls "the many uses of representation" which include this one: "Constantly represented, women were subjected to the view that men had of them; expected to conform, women had a discursive reality imposed on them as principle of truth, and their own life constantly proceeded between the desire to be and the need to exist; between deflected constraints or in observance of norms. (...) Also when women spoke, it was not the individual who was heard, but rather the representation which made her a social being; ideas representative of the category that is supposed to be represented are attributed to this being who is denied the status of political subject."²⁴

The challenge lies in this process so essential to any citizenship: the individuation of women. This dynamic implies the means to acquire a personal status without having to constantly be categorised as the member of a social group in order to take action and pose as a political subject. Failing such individuation, the only choice possible, if it can be called that, lies in escape from the constraints of a prescribed femininity or observance of its norms.

The same ambiguities can be seen in the speech by the Catholic woman senator, Baroness della Faille d'Huyse: "Indeed, what is a democracy where more than half the people cannot participate in government? (...) We proudly recognise the courage of those women who worked in the resistance; we recall with emotion the martyrdom of those women who lived in

concentration camps from which many never returned. (...) Rest assured that in their participation in our public life women will be just as conscientious, just as sincere, just as willing to do right as when each day they unflaggingly do their natural tasks in the home."²⁵

Again the political citizenship of women is legitimised in the name of common membership in the nation through patriotism and in the name of naturalised femininity. In this sense, the figure of the citizen-soldier is reaffirmed. The question can again be asked whether the quest to have their political rights recognised in the name of difference and at the same time in the name of their common humanity with men is not expressed in a tension between the will to be and the need to exist which weighs upon those women who, although representatives, are constantly represented and confronted with the idea that is conveyed in the norms of a prescribed femininity. Is that not the principle of reality for any woman who enters politics: to sit alongside male representatives while observing rules that contrast the representations of femininity with the representations of political power. The problem will again arise with the law of 1994 on the system of quotas.

1.3. The quota system

The parliamentary debates on the bill to introduce a system of quotas was aimed at promoting a balanced distribution between men and women on electoral lists, with the focus on accepting or rejecting positive discrimination in relation to the notion of equality. The problem arises, because the recognition of women's right to vote does not imply parity, on the contrary. The political underrepresentation of women has been manifest since 1949.²⁶

The balanced representation of women and men seems to be the most consensual objective that exists. It is not surprising that it appears obvious for the Socialist political forces. Thus for Flemish Socialist Leo Peeters: "The process of a growing integration of women in a certain number of fields has not spread to political life. It is therefore up to the politicians to take the initiative in the matter."²⁷ On the other hand, it is more surprising in the case of the neofascists. Even the woman representative of the Vlaams Blok, the Flemish nationalist and neofascist party, has come out in "favour of the objective of the bill under examination, which is to increase women's presence in politics," although she is opposed to the introduction of quotas.²⁸ In fact, the legitimacy of the bill's objective is the most consensual that exists, since equality between men and women is confused with the notion of balance.

But what is at stake is, on the one hand, the type of equality referred to, with what that implies as notion of the role of the State, and on the other hand, the arguments mobilised to ensure its legitimacy. In fact, whereas the Liberals prefer equal opportunity, the environmentalists

opt for equal results, and the Socialists and Social Christians are in favour of positive discrimination with a gradual shift from quotas to parity. These perspectives go hand in hand with disagreement over the means to be used: should a structural measure (i.e. quotas) be used to ensure this balanced distribution between men and women and in so doing sustain the regulating role of the State, that is to say the fact that the State must fulfil a role here of providing the incentive or guarantee? Whereas the Liberals, the Volksunie (VU or "People's Union", the Flemish democratic nationalist party), and the Vlaams Blok (VB) consider, unlike the Socialists and Christian Socialists, that the adoption of a law in the matter is an endangerment to freedom and produces a series of perverse effects, the environmentalists and the French Democratic Front (FDF, party of the French-speaking community) mobilise the argument that the bill is futile, since it does not guarantee equal results.

Of course, the options are sometimes not so clear-cut. Thus, there are times when Socialist representatives mobilise the arguments of futility and endangerment. The French-speaking Socialist deputy Dufour is obviously not very favourable to the system of quotas when he says: "it is an extremely serious matter to debase universal suffrage. This time, with these quotas, I consider it totally distorted. I regret this, because I am in full agreement with the objective sought; but here, we are contenting ourselves with sticking a plaster on a wooden leg so that we have a clear conscience."²⁹ There are also times when the representatives of the VU have contradictory arguments. Thus, the representative of the VU, Lauwers, announced the abstention of his political group: "The objective of the texts is commendable but my group will nonetheless abstain. There is no reason for politics to be only men's business. Proportional representation must nonetheless be the result of a process of emancipation and not a legal obligation. (...) I am not in favour of quotas. Women - as a pressure group - could then form their own party, and while we're at it elderly people could too."³⁰ Obviously there is the fear here of institutionalising a cleavage between men and women in politics, something this representative explicitly expresses in his controversy with the Flemish Christian Socialist woman minister Smet. I will return to this later. It is worth noting at present that the VU woman senator Maes argues in favour of quotas in a gradualist perspective of parity democracy while nonetheless using the arguments of the bill's futility in achieving equal results. "Parity democracy is an objective that many are endeavouring to achieve, even if only in words. (...) I agree that a quota can be introduced to ensure a proper participation of women. In my view, 33% is a good figure to absorb the female deficit. A minimum amount of representation is necessary to influence the political culture. (...) An increase in the number of women candidates as an isolated measure is not in itself good. The number of women elected must also increase. (...) This proposal can even have a negative effect. There is currently a limited number of women and they usually obtain a good result. A large number of women spread across the list for non-eligible seats risks, however, having a negative effect for

women. (...). I therefore argue for a distribution on an equal basis for all the seats on the lists but also for the eligible seats."³¹ We will return later to the problem of parity democracy in relation to the problem of quotas. Let us just say at the moment that the demand for parity is used pragmatically from a gradualist viewpoint.

In a totally different perspective, the woman representative of the VB is opposed to the system of quotas, using two arguments specific to reactionary rhetoric: the endangerment to freedom and the perverse effect. Thus, Dillen puts it in these terms: "This bill tremendously restricts freedom of action. Can the legislator impose the number of seats to be reserved for women candidates? We must avoid any form of positive discrimination. Discrimination of all kinds is inadmissible. It is a mark of contempt for women. Where is the respect of women? For a woman, the criterion for being elected would be her sex and not her capacities."³² In the light of the conventional far-right programme denying women's citizenship, such concerns are quite surprising.³³

The Liberal argument focuses on equal opportunity: the French speakers expect to arrive at this by eliminating the top box on the ballot sheet that allows the citizen to vote for a party and its ranking of candidates instead of voting for individual candidates within a party. The Dutch speakers advocate neutralisation of the top box. Without going into the technical proposals for this, this type of proposal calls for, in the name of freedom, a renewal of the political elites as indicated by French-speaking Liberal Bertouille in his speech: "(...) by liberating the democratic space, a more steady renewal of political leaders is created while ensuring their rejuvenation."³⁴ The objective of a more balanced distribution of political representation in favour of women is in this way instrumentalised to the benefit of a relegitimisation of politics. The perspective of the women Liberals is probably more that of equal treatment between men and women while using the arguments of perverse effect and endangerment. Thus, the French-speaking woman Liberal Stengers speaks out against the introduction of quotas, underlining: "I must repeat that no useful or fighting seat is reserved for them and I will not add all that has been said about the humiliating side to the quota (...) is it not true, gentlemen, that men arrive with the presumption that they are competent and women arrive quite often with a heavy burden of proof to give?"³⁵ As for the leader of women Liberals, J. Herzet: "In a way, the current situation is a violation of the equal rights of all citizens, at all levels. (...). Caricaturing the situation, there are even times when I think that if women have obtained the right to vote, they have still not obtained the right to be elected! For it is one thing to introduce a right and another thing to find oneself in conditions that enable or that favour the exercise of this right! Without this, the established right risks being a dead letter for a long time. It is therefore precisely in the conditions that concern the exercise of the right to political equality that we find the reasons for the weak representation of women in politics."³⁶ This is a surprising Liberal argument, which consists in contrasting formal equality

with real equality. Actually, this is not at all the case, for in the continuation of this speech we find the three arguments that legitimise the rejection of positive discrimination: the vain nature of the bill since it will not achieve results, its perverse nature for women and the endangerment of freedom. "You talk about women candidates, but we talk about elected women (...) discrimination, even positive, is always discrimination; should de facto discrimination be eliminated and replaced by rightful discrimination? is it not offensive to the mind "to impose" legally on women - or on men - participation in political life with the risk of filler-in candidatures (...) a phenomenon that could eventually cause perverse effects for women? Nothing good is done in a situation of constraint."³⁷

With a view to achieving equal results, the environmentalist group (Ecolo/Agalev) denounces the vain nature of the bill but rejects the perverse effect argument, in that it calls for a structural reform guaranteed by the State. For the French-speaking environmentalist Cheron: "The argument that women candidates would be elected not so much for their intrinsic qualities but because of the existence of quotas obviously doesn't hold up. (...) As far as the bill under examination is concerned in practical terms, positive discrimination towards women has to do with candidatures and party presentation formalities. It does not offer (...) any guarantee of an increased number of women in the different assemblies."³⁸

As for those advocating the introduction of the quota system on lists of candidates, the women Socialist and Christian Socialist representatives seem to see this as a step towards parity democracy. Thus, French-speaking woman Socialist Lizin said: "It's a text that enables us to advance towards parity, I therefore consider it positive."³⁹ As for the French-speaking Christian Socialist woman deputy de T Serclaes, the bill has the merit of injecting a dynamic that will make it possible to reach a "critical mass" and parity: "in the overall participation of women in political life, it is the number effect that must come into play. Quotas must begin with one fourth and then rise to one third, the ideal objective being parity."⁴⁰ Or there is Flemish Christian Socialist woman deputy Merckx who said: "The bill introduces the principle of a balanced representation of men and women at all levels of power: beginning with a ratio of 1 to 4 we will move on to a ratio of 1 to 3 and finally arrive at parity democracy."⁴¹ These speeches thus lead us to consider the representations of representative democracy.

2. Quotas: a step towards parity democracy or a step towards democracy as "microcosm" of society?

2.1. Quotas and parity

Quotas are a system of target percentages whose starting point is the observation of flagrant and persistent inequalities in women's access to public responsibilities. It is a remedial measure aimed to make up for the imbalance created by a social division of labour that is to the detriment of women and to compensate for the failure to take account of women who are as qualified as men in the different spheres of life in society. Such a measure falls within the context of positive discrimination.

The anti-quota arguments are generally based on the following idea: equality between men and women being legally recognised, a law introducing quotas for women would violate formal equality. In this way formal equality reinforces real inequality. The demand for parity intends to go beyond the real equality and formal equality dilemma. That is one of the strong arguments in favour of parity.

Furthermore, parity is not limited to the problem of women's representation in the spheres of power. According to E. Vogel-Polsky⁴², parity is an answer to the question: who is the human person of the Universal Declaration of 1948? Who is that person with inalienable fundamental rights? Indeed, parity would be a recognition of the sexual duality of the human race. We are not talking here about a right to difference or "reinscribing the difference in the bastion of the universality of rights. The difference places emphasis on the antagonism, opposition, hierarchy of the genders: it is the source of exclusion or domination. Sexual duality places emphasis on parity, that is to say on the equal value in dignity and in rights of the two components of the human being (...) [to include] in the law the recognition of gender, that is to say the existence of a social relationship based on sex which has to be taken into account to construct an equal status of the gendered human persons."⁴³

In this perspective, parity would transcend group representation, for all the socio-legal categories such as minorities, language groups are, without exception, comprised of individuals of one sex or the other, placed in a gender relationship dynamic.⁴⁴ In this sense, the challenge of parity is not to assert that women would represent women, and men, men; equally, they would represent the people as a whole.⁴⁵ This argument is clearly in contrast with differentialism and is more in line with anthropologic naturalism.⁴⁶

The pitfall of these two approaches certainly lies in the search for foundations for political choices when the distinctive feature of political modernity has been to brush aside such a quest

to the benefit of an introspective and deliberative activity carried out by people aiming at autonomy.

The demand for parity raises the following questions in relation to representative democracy: How can universal rights be separated from uniformity? How can differences that reveal universal rights be recognised? What assurances are there that the identity-based quests will not turn into separatism and idiosyncrasy?

These are all questions that refer to the recognition of the concrete heteronomous person as the basis of the political inclusion of women; this does not mean simply adding women but implies the recasting of the social pact which enables women to be representatives of the universal, which makes ample room for the recognition of a plurality that is irreducible to the plurality of opinions and therefore makes room for the introduction of otherness in representation. Our intention is not to examine the terms of the debate on parity or the impasses.⁴⁷ The aim here was to differentiate between the problem of quotas and that of parity. Our objective consists in examining in this regard the representations conveyed with regard to representative democracy.

2.2. Proportionality as a link between parity and democracy as microcosm

The demand for parity is based on a presupposition with regard to representative democracy: this democracy would be a political system which, by definition, excludes women or makes them a minority group⁴⁸. Would it not be more appropriate to ask the question whether the political exclusion of women is not simply a transgression of the democratic principle?⁴⁹ Does their exclusion from posts of representation not cast a profound doubt on the outcome of the crisis of legitimacy of the representative systems?⁵⁰

In any case, some members of parliament clearly see the balanced representation of men and women in politics in terms of closer relations between the representative and the citizen. Thus, Dutch-speaking Socialist Peeters, a man, stated: "We're convinced that the participation, which is guaranteed [by the State], of women in politics can also bring politics closer to people, precisely because women quite often have a better knowledge of the living conditions of half of our population, due to their direct involvement".⁵¹ And Dutch-speaking Christian Socialist Tyberghien-Vandenbussche, a woman, said: "Politics are perhaps going to move closer to people, given that the everyday living conditions of women will be more experienced and felt - because often it is much easier for women to feel the aspirations of other women - be given expression and defended on the political scene".⁵² And finally, for Dutch-speaking woman Christian Socialist Merckx-Van Goey whose bill was behind the process of elaborating the law of 1994, "women

constitute (...) a social group having specific needs and interests whose defence could probably be better ensured by women who are precisely the ones concerned"⁵³

Clearly, the idea of the representative as a mirror of the characteristics of the voter seems to correspond to requirements of a symbolic nature which prove important for those outside the political system. De facto, existential or status-based minorities can in this respect demand representatives who not only ensure that their interests are taken into account but also give them the feeling that they are present on the political scene through the representatives' personal characteristics.

There remains an ambiguity that Hedwige Peemans-Poullet sums up in these terms: "History shows us that women's' interests are divided at least in the short term, that feminist organisations are also divided, that women politicians, even when they are feminists, can all of a sudden support unexpected positions, that in any case, they are not the representatives of women (who, moreover, do not form a homogeneous whole) and do not rely on women's organisations (which, moreover, do not have similar positions)."⁵⁴

The problem of the legitimacy crisis of the representative system arises in relation to the demand for parity and in relation to the quota system, even if parity aims to transcend the question of representation, for the institutional expression of parity proves to be a percentage that is fixed for the minimum presence of each of the two genders in the composition of the advisory bodies of the State, elected assemblies, the courts and that is fixed for their presence in the structures of the political parties, etc.⁵⁵ In this sense, it is possible to understand why quotas appear in the parliamentary debates as a step towards parity democracy. Parity would only be a system of exactly proportional quotas applied to women. But if the debate on parity reveals a move beyond the idea of proportionality⁵⁶, political practice in Belgium brings about this shift, especially since parliamentary discussions usually take place in pragmatic terms and not in terms of principles.⁵⁷ It is in this perspective that we can consider the debate engaged between VU deputy Lauwers, a man, and Flemish Social Christian Minister Smet, a woman⁵⁸.

Lauwers asked the question in these terms: "The different ideologies aside, do women make their own contribution to politics as women? If they have the same interests, then they should create their own party. Otherwise, we will also have to introduce a quota for the other interest groups within the existing parties. If it is an interest group, then we can also say the same thing about senior citizens and young people. I am not an advocate of quotas, because I find that it is a kind of false corporatism."⁵⁹ This speech looks at the representation of women by reducing women to a social category among others and by placing them in the context of various interests. So, the rebalancing of representation is presented as the expression of social pluralism, because the sexual difference is seen as a differentiation of the social body. The rebalancing of representation can also take a neo-corporatist form if the objective is the institutionalisation of

the genderrelationship, like the institutionalisation of the social relationship of the classes that occurred in the social negotiating and consultative bodies. The question of quotas therefore falls in this perspective of interest and pressure group. The pluralist and neo-corporatist versions implicitly see the democratic deficit for women as a delay in women's political and cultural emancipation and quotas as a remedial instrument.

Minister Smet's counterargument to this logic is a logic of parity: "Women don't represent a group like the others do. They form with men the basic group of society and within the group of women and group of men, you have elderly people, young people, disabled people, etc. If you begin saying that senior citizens must also demand seats, you make a poor comparison, because this group is of a totally different nature from the group of women and men. Furthermore, I don't think that most women want a specific party (...). We're only asking men to understand our problems. We want to solve them together and not through confrontation"⁶⁰. Interior Minister Tobback, a man and co-author with Minister Smet of the bill, speaks from the same perspective: "We are not talking about the structure of an interest group or quotas. You compare (he tells the VU deputy) women to elderly people, the disabled or other minorities. The major difference is that here we are talking about a majority that is not represented, and not a protected minority. A majority of inhabitants is excluded from participating in political life for reasons of sex."⁶¹

In fact, it is the perspective of proportionality between men and women in political representation that is the basis not so much of the idea of parity democracy but of an approach of representative democracy as the mirror of the sociological composition of society, as the reflection of the interests of each social group, as the microcosm of society. The idea of proportionality obviously has the consensus of parliamentarians. There is probably nothing surprising about this, given its congruence with a society that is still characterised by segmented pluralism and a political system founded on consociative democracy.

2.3. Democracy as microcosm of society: ambiguities in the tension between equality and difference

In the context of the question concerning us, the notion of representative democracy as a microcosm of society ties together, in the same whole, the argument of proportionality, the utilitarian argument, the argument of the specific nature of the interests and needs or of the behaviours and values.

Analysing the speeches delivered at the international meeting organised in Geneva in 1989 by the Interparliamentary Union, Catherine Decauquier⁶² showed that all the arguments advanced at that time could be divided into four major types. The argument of proportionality links "(...)

the importance of the women segment in the population to the idea of political representation in proportion to this segment."⁶³ From this viewpoint, political representation must reflect as faithfully as possible the relative size of the different social groups in the community. The utilitarian argument underscores the lack of efficiency and legitimacy of political office when it is deprived of the competences of half of society. The argument of specific interests and needs stresses the fact that "women politicians would represent the interests of women on the basis of the postulate that the elected official is present in the place of the persons for whom he acts, and that he acts the way these persons would act"⁶⁴. Because of this, the increased political representation of women would lead to a change in policies, which would take greater account of the interests and needs of the social group called "women". The argument of specific values and behaviours is based on the idea of a culture specific to women, different from that of men. From this viewpoint, an increase in the number of women representatives would compel politicians to modify their values and ways of doing things.

The speech by the French-speaking Liberal woman senator Herzet is probably the one that, in the parliamentary debates, best sums up all of these arguments why women need to be present in politics. She put it this way: "First of all, because it is a question of the respect of democracy. Secondly, because doing without half the population, with the specific qualities that women have, is a loss for society, an enormous waste of potential knowledge and experiences. With regard to one of these qualities, allow me to quote Voltaire who said: 'All the reasonings of men are not worth one woman's intuition.' A balanced participation of men and women make it possible to better take into account the needs and interests of this population as a whole. It will also enable a different approach to the problems that could create other ideas, other values, other behaviours and in so doing enrich the whole of society."⁶⁵

Other speeches, be they Christian Socialist, Socialist or Environmentalist are along the same lines. All express a quest for the simultaneous recognition of the otherness and the universal.

At the end of this 20th century, this search is perhaps more an expression of a difference assumed than a difference suffered. But the ambiguities in the tension between equality and difference remain. Does the number provide the recipe to transgress, circumvent, resist or oppose the strongly prescribed norms of femininity? It is true that the virtual exclusion of women in politics can only make them an existential minority, which can only suffer the sexual difference. Mariette Sineau, in her work on women in politics,⁶⁶ stresses the extent to which the difference suffered has to do with the fact that all women politicians can be reduced to their femininity which has a negative connotation. The story of more than one woman politician attests to this⁶⁷. Women politicians represent a double transgression: transgression of the hierarchy between the genders and transgression of the sexual division of labour. Otherness, as Mariette Sineau notes,

is based on the body. In politics, only women are considered gendered beings. Men are seen as neutral. The difference suffered therefore lies in this principle of non-reciprocity. Also, women politicians are condemned to being shut up in roles imposed on them or to transgress them. Condemned to transgress them, these women are forced to go out of their way to constantly prove that they are the best. Condemned to otherness, they are never considered colleagues but assistants. Thus it is possible to evaluate all the ambivalence that exists in fighting the effects of the sexual division of labour and in demanding a difference that in the end is more suffered than assumed as long as women remain an existential minority in politics. To reach a "critical mass"⁶⁸ like in the Scandinavian countries would enable the difference to be assumed and to open breaches in the logic of assimilation with the male norm. In this perspective, the challenge certainly consists in shattering the opposition between the representations of femininity and the representations of power and in making possible the emergence of positive models of female power. So far, however, politics seem to remain men's business.

2.4. Politics, still men's business

This theme was apparent when the parliamentary debates of 1994 referred to a currently male political culture or to the mechanisms explaining the political underrepresentation of women.

Women representatives of all sides clearly denounce this idea that politics are men's business. Thus, the French-speaking Christian Socialist deputy, Nathalie de T Serclaes, said: "Our democracy is showing obvious signs of fatigue. It is an opportunity to move one step closer to the citizens and in particular women citizens. It is true that women are probably less interested than men in politics. How could they be when the image that is given of politics is almost exclusively a male one? There is no doubt that they would feel more concerned if they were better represented, and if the problems specific to them were better taken into account."⁶⁹ French-speaking Liberal deputy Stengers stated in her speech: "(...) nothing will be done without a profound change in mentality in parliament. For is it not true, gentlemen, that men arrive here with a presumption of competence and that women quite often arrive here with a heavy burden of proof to give?"⁷⁰ And Liberal Senator Herzet said, for her part, reviewing the prejudices in the political underrepresentation of women: "Finally, another reason given: we can't find any valid women! Do you know, my gentlemen colleagues, what a valid woman means for our political leaders? It is a pretty, educated, young woman, perfectly succeeding her family and professional life, available, devoted and who also gets a lot of votes! And if after that she is smart enough to blend into the woodwork, that doesn't hurt anything! At that cost, do you know many valid men?"⁷¹ Among the Dutch speakers, the Christian Socialist woman Minister Smet put it this way:

"The law must change not only the conditions for women but also for men. The leadership of the parties, which is generally men's business, will have to seek women on the lists."⁷²

Other speeches refer to a functioning of politics that is less male-dominated. Thus, the Dutch-speaking Christian Socialist Tyberghien-Vandenbussche, a woman, considers that an increase in the number of women in politics could modify certain aspects of the current functioning of politics, particularly with regard to "(...) the hierarchy of the decision-making structures, the political agenda, the political style, meeting techniques and a lot of other aspects that do not make it possible to reconcile family and politics, job and family"⁷³ And the woman Dutch-speaking Socialist Van der Wildt said that it would not be until more women entered politics "(...) that we will be able to make the political activity more human and eliminate the image of politicians who are efficient but operate like robots without feelings, favouring rationality at the expense of any emotion."⁷⁴

Among the speeches by men, only the one by the Ecolo deputy clearly denounces male chauvinism: "(...) to change the face of politics by giving it more feminine traits: the idea is not only attractive, it is now imperative. Would power and femininity be incompatible? We would be tempted to believe it when we examine the percentage of women who tread upon the red and green carpets in the Parliament building. (...) "⁷⁵ Addressing the minister of the interior to justify the negative vote of his group, the Green deputy continues: "What you have established, Mr Minister, is unfortunately not what should be the subject of this bill, that is to say the twilight of the macho parliamentarians."⁷⁶

When the men representatives regret that politics remain men's business, they often point the finger at the socio-cultural mechanisms such as the lack of time women have because of the tasks of reproduction and the politico-institutional mechanisms that bar women's access to politics such as the holding of more than one office, the oligarchical nature of the parties, the ascent to notability. This leads some to ask the question why women are not interested in politics, even if it is to say that women are the victims and not guilty. But few men wonder why politics do not interest women, a question that would have the merit of challenging the functioning and organisation of politics. Without eliminating the possibility of explaining the political underrepresentation of women, beginning with the individual behaviours specific to women and their conditions of existence, by turning the question upside down it is possible to clarify the problem from the angle of the social division of labour and gender relationships which run through politics.

As long as Belgium lived with the model of the male breadwinner, it is clear that the first partial then total acquisition of the right to vote could only be seen in reference to the figure of the citizen-soldier and a naturalised difference. In contrast, the end of this century has seen a transformation of the "societal paradigm" with regard to the gender relationship, that is to say the

development of a dual breadwinner during the post World War II boom period, then during the crisis years, its persistence despite the increasingly clear reappearance of familism. If the challenge of balanced political representation between men and women continues to include the tension between equality and difference, the difference seems more assumed than suffered. It should be stressed, though, that women's inclusion in representative democracy and political citizenship is based less on a change in the representation of women than on changes which are probably real and profound but nonetheless limited. For in the end, these representations have had a common pedestal since the turn of the century: the mobilisation of arguments to maintain the status quo, including among the progressive forces.

Notes

- ¹ Bérengère Marques-Pereira is an Associate Professor at the Free University of Brussels, Director of Research at the Institute of Sociology
- ² See in this regard Hassenteufel, P., « L'Etat-providence ou les métamorphoses de la citoyenneté » in *L'Année Sociologique*, n°1, vol.46, pp.127-149.
- ³ Marshall, T.H., "Social Class and Citizenship" in Bottomore, T., Marshall, T.H., *Social Class and Citizenship*, London Verso, 1974.
- ⁴ Hirschman, A., *Deux siècles de rhétorique réactionnaire*, Paris, Fayard, 1995.
- ⁵ See in the abundant literature on this Lorwin, V.R., "Conflits et compromis dans la politique belge", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, n°323, 1966; Lijpardt, A., *Democracy in Plural Societies*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977, pp.21-52; Lentzen, E., Mabilie, X., "Rythmes et changements dans la politique belge", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, n°1500, 1995; Molitor, M., "Orthodoxie des piliers et conduites novatrices", *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, 1992, pp.131-142.
- ⁶ Paye, O., "Féminiser le politique: recitoyennisation ou tribalisation" in Sextant, *Citoyenneté*, issue coordinated by Marques-Pereira, B., n°7-1997, p.159.
- ⁷ See Jenson, J., "Paradigms and Political Discourses: Protective Legislation in France and the United States before 1914", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol.XXII, 1989.
- ⁸ See Gubin, E., "Les femmes et la citoyenneté politique en Belgique", in Sextant, pp.163-187.
- ⁹ Parl. Doc., Chamber of Representatives, n°105, session 1919-1920, p.4.
- ¹⁰ Parl. Ann. Chamber of Representatives, 12 January 1921, p.300.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p.301.
- ¹² Ibid., p.302.
- ¹³ Ibid., p.303.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p.357.
- ¹⁵ Parl. Ann. Senate, 19 March 1948, p.705.
- ¹⁶ Parl. Ann. Chamber of Representatives, 18 and 19 February 1948, p.2.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p.8.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p.2.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p.3.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p.8.
- ²¹ Ann. parl., Senate, 19 March 1948, p.703.
- ²² Ibid., pp.704-705.
- ²³ Gubin, E., Van Molle, L., *Femmes et politique en Belgique*, Bruxelles, Editions Racine, 1998, p.36.
- ²⁴ Riot Sarcey, M., "De la représentation et ses multiples usages" in Riot Sarcey, M., *Démocratie et représentation*, Paris, Editions Kimé, 1995, p. 137-138.
- ²⁵ Ann. parl., Senate, 24 March 1948, p.780.
- ²⁶ Until 1974 and the first campaign "vote for a woman", women represented less than 5% of all members of parliament. Since then, and until recently, the proportion of women deputies has varied between 5.5% and 9.5%, and that of women senators between 6.5% and 12%. There has almost never been more than three women present at the same time in a federal government, and the number of women burgomasters has never exceeded 5%. This law limits to two thirds of the total the number of candidates of the same sex who can be presented on

an electoral list, regardless of the election concerned (communal, provincial, regional, community, federal, European). Entering into full force on 1 January 1999, this measure is currently at a transition stage which consists in introducing a maximum of three quarters (instead of two thirds) of candidates of the same sex who can be presented on an electoral list. It was applied for the first time and so far the only time in the communal and provincial elections of October 1994, following which the number of women town councillors rose from 14% to 20%, that of women deputy burgomasters from 11% to 14% and that of women burgomasters from 4% to 5%. In the last legislative elections of 1995, the proportion of women deputies reached 12% and that of women senators 22%. It should be noted, however, that the last constitutional reform reduced the powers of the Senate in relation to those of the Chamber of Representatives.

See *Les femmes dans les parlements 1945-1995*. Etude statistique mondiale, Genève, Union Interparlementaire, Series "Rapports et documents", n°23, 1995, pp.78-79.

27 Doc. parl., Chamber of Representatives, n° 1316/4, session 1993-1994, 24 March 1994, p.12.

28 Doc. parl., Chamber of Representatives, n° 1316/4, session 1993-1994, 24 March 1994, p.14.

29 Ann. Parl., Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.1305.

30 Summary record, Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.742.

31 Record, Senate, 6 May 1994, p.727.

32 Record, Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.732.

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34 Doc. parl., Chamber of Representatives, n°1316/4, 24 March 1994, session 1993-1994, p.10.

35 Ann. Parl., Chamber of Representatives, 31 March 1994, p.1470.

36 Ann. parl., Senate, 6 May 1994, p.2034.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Doc. parl., Chamber of Representatives, *op.cit.*, pp.15-16.

39 Ann. parl., Chamber of Representatives, 31 March 1994, p.1470.

40 Ann. parl., Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.1342.

41 Record, Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.743.

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46 Like the differentialist movement, the movement founded on anthropologic naturalism intends to go beyond the problem of equality implied by the inclusion of women as individuals. However, the first movement is based on an ontology of difference which challenges the universalist postulate of generic human unicity as a ruse to cover up the distinction between male and female which is granted a status of essence. In this perspective, parity appears as a split

- juxtaposing the two gender figures of humankind in the same public forum, and even reserves for them separate statuses of citizenship. Unlike differentialism, the movement founded on anthropologic naturalism postulates that human nature is gendered and that human essence is always expressed through difference and a relationship between the two genders; in this sense, the relationship between men and women would be based on an immediately natural determination that would be the genuine generic relationship and that would be distinct from all the other social relationships. From this perspective, parity would convey its expression. See Vogel, J., « Parité et égalité », *Cahiers du GEDISST*, op.cit., pp.57-76.
- 47 Marques-Pereira, B., *La parité: les termes du débat*, communication présentée au colloque "La démocratie à l'épreuve du féminisme", organised by the Université des Femmes, Brussels, 13-14 March 1998. See also, Mossuz-Lavau, J., *Femmes/Hommes. Pour la parité*, Paris, Presses de Science Po, 1998.
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- 56 Marques-Pereira, B., op.cit.
- 57 Paye, O., op.cit., pp.139-164.
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- 59 *Ibid.*, p.1334
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 Record, Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.742.
- 62 Decauquier, C., "Retour sur les arguments fondant la demande d'une représentation accrue des femmes en politique", *Res Publica*, vol. 36, 1994, pp.119-127.
- 63 *Ibid.*, p.120.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p.122.
- 65 Ann. parl., Senate, 6 May 1994, p.2034.
- 66 Sineau, M., *Des femmes en politique*, Paris, Economica, 1988.
- 67 See Freedman J., *Femmes et politique. Mythes et symboles*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996.
- 68 The notion implies the quantitative leap of 30% in both absolute and relative value; this leap is also of a qualitative nature, because it enables an improvement in the performance of women and a reduction in the stress which comes from the position of the "woman as symbol" inherent in existential minorities. This qualitative leap modifies the balance of power, because women are then able to use the organisational resources of the institutions to improve their individual and collective position. That is to say that the fixing of quotas is an indicator of the power of women and is an institutional resource of subsequent mobilisation. Even if the "critical mass" remains a minority, it is in a position to create and use the institutional resources to transform the genderrelationship.
- 69 Ann. parl., Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.1341.

- 70 Ann. parl., Chamber of Representatives, 31 March 1994, p.1470.
71 Ann parl., Senate, 6 May 1994, p.2034.
72 Record, Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.745.
73 Ann. parl., Senate, 6 March 1994, p.2032.
74 Ibid., p.2038
75 Ann. parl., Chamber of Representatives, 29 March 1994, p.1342.
76 Ibid., p.1344

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GEP - THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME GENDER, EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICS

THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME GENDER, EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICS (GEP) deals with the changing political importance of gender in modern societies. During the last 30 years, women have moved from a position of political powerlessness to political presence and influence in the Danish democracy. Women's new role in politics has had deepgoing consequences - not only for women but also for men.

The aim of the programme is to analyse the interplay between gender relations and discourses of gender on the one hand and changes in the European welfare states and models of democracy on the other. The basic hypothesis is that politics is a determining factor for the construction of gender - and conversely that gender relations influence the political discourses and the political institutions. From this double assumption, new questions concerning the interconnection between civil, political, and social citizenship are analysed.

The programme emphasises two factors: First analysing processes and patterns behind the double tendencies toward empowerment and social exclusion of social groups in terms of gender and class. Secondly, the differentiation within the group of women and men analysing the interplay between gender and class. Maintaining the perspective of gender, these differentiations will make visible the differences of generations as well as the differences between the educated/employed and the marginalized groups.

Questions connected with public equality politics, the increasing representation of women, women's participation in the local political communities and the political elite, as well as strategies against marginalization and poverty will be discussed through projects and case studies.

The project is carried out by six scientists from four different institutions.

JOHN ANDERSEN
Department of Social Sciences
Building 23.1., PO 260
Roskilde University
DK-4000 Roskilde
Phone: +45 46 75 77 11
Fax: +45 46 75 66 18
E-mail: johna@ruc.dk

ANETTE BORCHORST
Department of Political Science
Aarhus University
Universitetsparken
DK-8000 Aarhus C
Phone: +45 89 42 11 33
Fax: +45 86 13 98 39
E-mail: ab@ps.au.dk

ANN-DORTE CHRISTENSEN
FREIA - Feminist Research Center
Aalborg University
Fibigerstraede 2
DK-9220 Aalborg Oest
Phone: +45 96 35 80 80
Fax: +45 98 15 32 98
E-mail: adc@i4.auc.dk

DRUDE DAHLERUP
Statsvetenskapliga Institutionen
Stockholm University
S-106 91 Stockholm
Sverige
Phone: +46 (0)8 16 49 65
Fax: +46 (0)8 15 25 29
E-mail: drude.dahlerup@statsvet.su.se

JØRGEN ELM LARSEN
Department of Sociology
Copenhagen University
Linnésgade 22
DK-1361 Copenhagen K
Phone: +45 35 32 32 80
Fax: +45 35 32 39 40
E-mail: Joergen.Elm.Larsen@
sociology.ku.dk

BIRTE SIIM (*COORDINATOR*)
FREIA - Feminist Research Center
Aalborg University
Fibigerstraede 2
DK-9220 Aalborg Oest
Phone: +45 96 35 80 80
Fax: +45 98 15 32 98
E-mail: siim@i4.auc.dk

PERNILLE T. ANDERSEN
(*PH.D.-STUDENT*)
Dept. of Development and Planning
Aalborg University
Fibigerstraede 2
DK-9220 Aalborg Oest
Phone: +45 96 35 80 80
Fax: +45 98 15 32 98
pernillea@i4.auc.dk

JENS ULRICH
(*PH.D.-STUDENT*)
Dept. of Development and Planning
Aalborg University
Fibigerstraede 2
DK-9220 Aalborg Oest
Phone: +45 96 35 80 80
Fax: +45 98 15 32 98
E-mail: ulrich@i4.auc.dk

GERDA THORSAGER
(*PH.D.-STUDENT*)
Department of Sociology
Copenhagen University
Linnésgade 22
DK-1361 Copenhagen K
Phone: +45 35 32 39 45
Fax: +45 35 32 39 40
E-mail: gerda.thorsager@
sociology.ku.dk